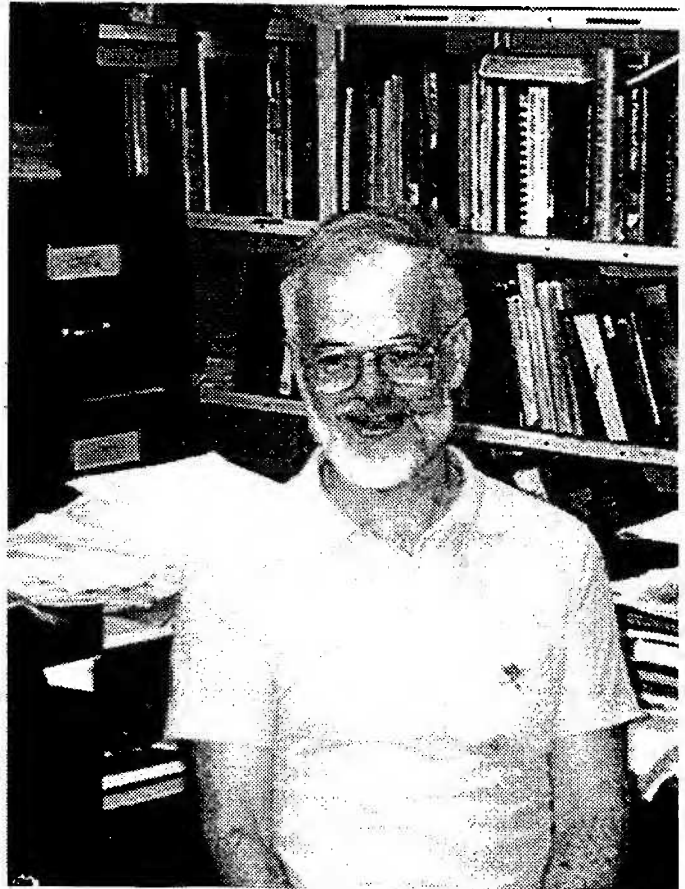


## Donald Evan McAllister, 1934-2001: A Tribute

During his career at the National Museum (now Canadian Museum of Nature) as Curator of Fishes (1958-1986), Senior Research Scientist (1986-1994), Research Emeritus and Research Associate (1994-2001), Donald Evan McAllister made significant contributions not only in his formal ichthyological and curatorial studies, but also in his thoughtful advocacy of responsible environmental management, and for protecting global biodiversity. He founded and edited two scientific journals, taught and inspired many individuals, and impressed all those he met as a warm, friendly, humble, and patient man devoted to both his family and his science. But above all else Don would have been most pleased by a colleagues's characterization of him as a true friend of the Earth.

Don was born 23 August, 1934, in Victoria, B. C. He took his B.A., M.A. (on freshwater sculpins of British Columbia), and Ph.D. at the University of British Columbia. His thesis for the latter, the Evolution of Branchiostegals and Classification of Teleostome Fishes, was published as a museum bulletin in 1968. During his Ph.D. studies, he spent a year as an NSERC Visiting Student at the Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan. He was the first ichthyologist on the staff of the National Museum since its creation as part of the Geological Survey in 1842, and was, unquestionably, one of the most energetic, innovative, issue-oriented and productive members of the staff. Although Don lacked administrative ambition, or the patience for it, he ran the ichthyology section with verve and infectious energy. He attracted, trained and encouraged a succession of assistant curators, technicians, contractees, visiting scientists, post-doctoral students, assistants and volunteers. His example of work ethic, compassion, and concern for those around him left its mark on everyone who passed through his section.

Don was, first and foremost, a collection builder. On his arrival at the museum, there were fewer than 4,500 specimens of fishes in the collection. Through every means available to him, staff expeditions, donations, purchases and trades, he built the collection into a world-class resource for taxonomic and life-history studies. By the year 2000, there were more than 585,000 specimens from all parts of the world, a remarkable achievement on its own. But, at the same time, Don was also a compulsive author who left a comprehensive published record of his interests. His bibliography exceeds 620 items\* including scientific



**Donald Evan McAllister, 1934-2001**

papers, books, popular articles, and book reviews, ranging from his Ph.D. thesis and a Guide to the Freshwater Sportfish of Canada, taxonomic revisions, papers on computers in museums, methods of collecting and preserving fishes, and the use of x-rays in taxonomic studies. He was also the originator of two environmental journals to which he contributed extensive overviews and informed opinion.

From the time of his appointment as curator, Don researched Arctic marine fishes with a view to a companion book to the fishes of the other Canadian coasts. He produced a preliminary checklist in 1960, followed by keys and a series of papers. A distributional atlas, more papers and a bibliography followed in the 1970s and 1980s. He compiled an extensive database which his successor, Brian Coad has continued. With the help of a number of museum staff and the financial support of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the long envisioned book is close to completion.

He was a pioneer and advocate of the use of computers in museums which led to his devising a standardized data sheet for recording detailed information in the field. He also compiled an as yet unpublished comprehensive list of ichthyological terms and their definitions. The computerized database of the fish collection

formed the basis for a list of the families and species of fishes of the world which lists more than 20,000 valid taxa.

Don held adjunct professorships at Carleton and Ottawa Universities, taught ichthyology at the latter, and participated on graduate student committees at both. In 1974, he organized the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists annual meeting in Ottawa, only the third time the Society met in Canada and the first meeting that was bilingual. Don was very active on the Fish and Marine Mammals subcommittee of the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada and wrote the first list of endangered fishes in Canada in 1970.

In the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, Don increasingly applied his wealth of experience and his social conscience to concerns for the planet. His writing and activities on international committees were directed at a wider audience than his ichthyological colleagues, and he moved into the Museum's newly-created Biodiversity group. He had by this time founded and edited the quarterly "Sea Wind", now in its 15th year of publication, and he mortgaged his house to fund conservation and training programs organized by its publisher, "Ocean Voice International". In 1991 he originated and edited eight volumes of the quarterly Canadian Biodiversity (later retitled "Global Biodiversity") published by CMN. In 2000, it was replaced with "Biodiversity: A Journal of Life on Earth" and published by the Tropical Conservancy. He was especially active in efforts to conserve the world's coral

reefs and finding non-destructive methods for the harvest of aquarium fishes by Philippine fishermen. He participated in Canada's Biodiversity Convention Advisory Group and advised on Canada's strategy on the Rio treaty signed in 1991.

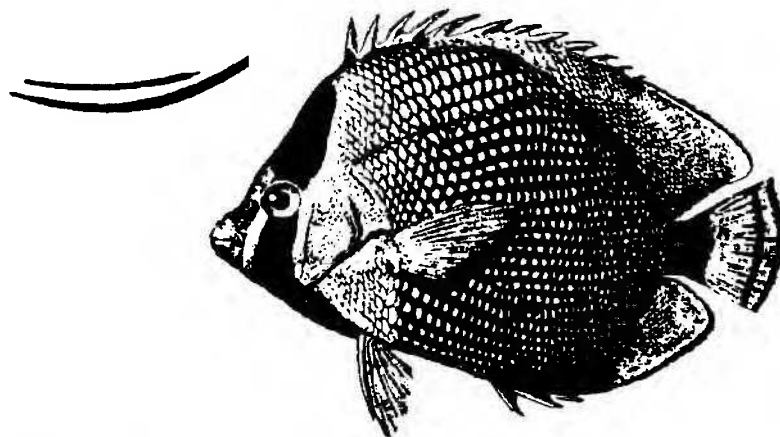
During a period of museum downsizing in 1993, in a characteristic selfless gesture, he volunteered early retirement to free a position so that a younger staff member could be retained. Following retirement he did not "ease up" on editing the conservation-oriented journals he had initiated, nor did he slacken his own perceptive contributions to them.

Early in his career Don had made personal contributions to studies of invertebrate animals, largely through his enthusiastic participation in two Museum expeditions in the 1960s with Drs. Edward L. Bousfield (coastal southeastern Alaska) and Arthur H. Clarke (east coast of Hudson Bay). During the Alaska expedition, Don's keen eyes spotted several unusual amphipods that were ectoparasitic on rockfish and greenling cod that he had collected. Back at the museum lab, most of the crustacean species proved new to science, one of which, *Paralafystius mcallisteri*, was named in his honour. His passing has left a void that no single individual is ever likely to fill.

Francis R. Cook, Charles G. Gruchy, and  
Brian W. Coad

\*A complete bibliography of Don McAllister's publications has been compiled by Brian Coad and will appear in the Canadian Field-Naturalist.

# SEA WIND



**SEA WIND** is published quarterly and may be obtained through membership or subscription from OCEAN VOICE INTERNATIONAL, P.O. Box 37026, 3332 McCarthy Road Ottawa, ON K1V 0W0, Canada, [www.ovi.ca](http://www.ovi.ca). PH: (613) 721-4541, Fax (613) 721-4562. Regular memberships: \$25. per year.